

CHIEF MINISTRIES

February 2020

The main thing to remember about the armor of God is that it's God's armor. You can't go out to the department store and put on this armor. You cannot think about His armor or imagine yourself in His armor to put it on. You have to move from the outer court of praise into the Holy of Holies of worship and completely surrender to God in order to put on His armor – This is holy armor! *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; v15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; v16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. v17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (Ephesians 6:14-17 ESV).*

Every piece of the armor of God pertains to our identity in Christ Jesus. The illustration of external armor reflects the internal reality of being in Him. Each piece is a mirror image of a spiritual truth concerning who we are in Christ. This month I'll deal with three!

Truth, Righteousness, and Peace

- Who is our truth? Jesus Christ
- Who is our righteousness? Jesus Christ
- Who is our one who establishes us in the gospel of peace? Jesus Christ
- Who is the author and finisher of our faith? Jesus Christ
- Who is our Savior? Jesus Christ
- Who is our living, incarnate Word of God? Jesus Christ

All of the armor we wear for spiritual battle is found in Jesus Christ!

No doubt the apostle Paul was thinking of the armor of the Roman soldier when he received the revelation of our spiritual armor from the Holy Spirit. From the many times he was imprisoned and heavily guarded by them, Paul spent hours in the company of the Roman guard. He was well familiar with their armor!

This analogy only applies to a certain point, however. The natural armor covered a Roman soldier from head to foot, but our spiritual armor permeates and purifies our entire being. The armor of God fully equips us for the spiritual war we wage in spirit, soul and body. No matter how big we are on the outside, we are ten foot tall and filled with the glory and power of God on the inside when we suit up in God's armor. Putting on the armor of God makes us holy as He is holy, and it all begins with facing the truth and getting rid of all the lies.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” (Ephesians 6:14)

Paul begins with a belt or girdle which the Roman soldier wore around his loins. This piece held some of the other pieces of armor in place, including the breastplate, which was attached to it, and the sword, which hung from it. The support and tension around the middle of the soldiers body also served as an attitude check, saying to the soldier, “you're here to fight. You've got a job to do. Stay focused.”

The obvious application is that we cannot accomplish anything for the Kingdom of God if our lives are not based on truth. In the Greek, this word “truth” does not refer to God's written word, but to an honesty of heart and purity of motive. We cannot win a spiritual battle if we are lying to ourselves, deceiving others, and running from the convictions of the Holy Spirit. Our foundation is shifting sand and we will be tossed to and fro by the wiles of the devil if we do not stand in truth.

Being brutally honest with ourselves is often difficult and many times painful. Ask any woman who wears a girdle or any soldier who has cinched up that belt around his loins – it isn't very comfortable! The belt of truth squeezes us! It causes us to come clean with God and get real about our lives.

Our "loins" also represent our reproductive organs, the most private area of our bodies. When we allow the Holy Spirit to deal with deception and lies in our lives, all our secret places that perhaps no one but our spouses know about our laid bare before Him. These are the areas where we are so deceived, we don't even know we were deceived. These are areas where we are so ashamed, we are embarrassed that God knows about them. The trouble is the enemy knows about the secret places too! That's why I believe the Holy Spirit begins with truth. Truth is the foundation for the entire armor. If we do not get healed and delivered in these weak areas of our lives, the devil will use them to divert us from God's plan and eventually destroy us.

Since the loins are our reproductive organs, Paul is also saying to the Ephesians, "don't reproduce anything that is not rooted in truth. Don't reproduce anything that is based upon a lie. Reproduce God's truth." This is a powerful principle of the Kingdom of God! Our loins contain the potential of our God-given creativity to reproduce spiritual things that will extend into eternity, things that will have everlasting value and significance. Unfortunately, our loins also have the capability to reproduce a lie.

Many Christians today are reproducing things based on anything but the truth of God's word. They are reproducing their past. They are acting on the basis of something the Lord has declared null and void long ago. Some are reproducing things based upon what others have said about them. Others are acting on the basis of insufficient information, and in many cases, false information. Still others are reproducing things based upon what they see and know in the temporal, natural realm. They are acting on the basis of information that is not eternal.

We should never engage in the reproduction of anything that rests upon a false premise but deal only in honesty and truth as we engage in any form of ministry or battle with the enemy. We must speak only God's truth about ourselves, and we must engage only in those activities that are in line with the truth of God, those things which God declares to be holy, pure, and righteous. We must act only as Jesus would act because He is literally walking in our shoes by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. *When our loins are girded with truth, we are completely identified in our innermost being with Christ Jesus.*

The enemy will always try to sidetrack us by enticing us to lie and operate according to that lie. Jesus called our enemy the father of all liars and said that no truth was to be found in him (John 8:44). He will try to get us into frustration and restlessness and worry on the basis of lies. He may present the thought that we aren't worthy of God's promises, that we are just not good enough, that our past negates our future, that we can't truly minister in the Lord's name, and he'll say, "what you see is what you're always going to get." Our response to these lies is to declare what God says about us – now and forever.

The devil may also use another, more deadly tactic on us. He will reinforce our comfort with sin. He will say things like, "the grace of God is so great, go ahead and sin for a little while, he'll forgive you later. Look at that filth, read that dirty book, smoke that K2 stick. Fantasize about that guys wife you saw at visitation or even doing the local weather on TV. Go ahead and take that, no one's looking. The moment the snake introduces these evil thoughts and desires we must jerk ourselves up on our most holy faith and declare the truth! "Devil, my trust and comfort are in God and God alone, so get out of my life!"

Any involvement in lying also endangers us. Speaking a lie destroys trust, a vital component in our relationships. When we lie about someone else, we disrupt our relationship with that person, other people's relationships with that person, and our relationship with God. When lying occurs frequently in a body of believers, eventually no one trusts anyone else, and some will not even trust God.

Believing and acting upon a lie of the devil is a terrible experience, but it doesn't necessarily mean we don't trust God. We may be honestly deceived. However, deliberately lying about someone or something is simply not trusting God to work all things for our good. We stepped in to cover our tracks and clean up the mess ourselves, but in the end, we make a bigger mess than we started with. So, it always pays to tell the truth, and to be totally honest with God, with ourselves, and with others.

When we are girded with truth, you are planted squarely on the rock of Jesus Christ. And every other piece of armor can be securely fastened onto you. But don't even think about putting on the breastplate of righteousness or the sword of the Spirit if you aren't girded with truth!

.....”and having the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14b).

The Roman soldier’s breastplate covered everything from his shoulders to his loins, and its main purpose was to protect him from a life-threatening wound to the heart. In God’s armor, righteousness deals with the essence of our spiritual condition in Christ, keeping our hearts pure and open to God. Although we hear and use the term “righteousness” frequently in the church, do we really know what it means?

Righteousness originates in God alone. It is His standard of motive, behavior, and character. God embodies righteousness because everything He says and does is absolutely, eternally right. When the Word of God declares that we are righteous through the blood of Jesus, we are absolutely, eternally right with God. Moreover, we are like God in our spirit. The Bible tells us that through Adam we were made sinners, but through Jesus Christ we are made righteous: *One man’s disobedience opened the door for all humanity to become sinners. So also one man’s obedience opened the door for many to be made perfectly right with God and acceptable to him. (Romans 5:19 TPT).*

Notice that we were made righteous, not covered with righteousness. In the Old Testament, the blood sacrifices covered believers. God demonstrated this first when He killed animals and used their skins to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness after they had sinned. But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ made the absolute, eternal blood sacrifice, so that believers could be righteous. The Greek word used for “made” is *katastatheesontai*, which indicates a permanent condition of being.

The word of God says that we become the righteousness of God the moment we believe in Jesus Christ and are saved. Afterward, when we put on the breastplate of righteousness as believers, we are literally allowing the righteousness of God to manifest in our lives. We are coming to grips with our identity as children of God, made in His image. We are not to take His righteousness and cover our sinful nature because we now have God’s nature in our hearts. We are simply choosing to live from God’s nature and righteousness instead of our own.

We must never count on our own righteousness! The Bible declares that our righteousness is as filthy rags before the Father: *We have all become contaminated with sin, and you see our self-righteousness as nothing better than a menstrual rag. We are all like fallen leaves, and our sins sweep us away like the wind. (Isaiah 64:6 TPT).*

This verse means we are never justified in saying, “I am righteous because I have lived a good life. After all, I fasted for twenty-two days and thirty-six minutes, so this promise should be mine. I’m a good person. My mom was a Christian. I go to church and attend all the classes and sing in the choir. I give to the poor all the time!”

No! Our righteousness must rest only in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, which transforms our lives from the inside out and wraps us up in His identity. Then our only legitimate declaration to the enemy is not what we have made of ourselves, but what Jesus has made us to be in Him. The truth is, we have no power over the enemy and even place ourselves in his hands when we stand in our own goodness.

When we start declaring our self-righteousness to the devil, we place ourselves in great jeopardy because it is impossible to withstand the attacks of the enemy in our own goodness. We open up ourselves to the devil’s scorn, and he’s going to laugh in our faces. He’s going to say, “And who are you?”

Remember the seven sons of a man called Sceva? They didn’t possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and they attempted to cast out an evil spirit in Jesus name. *The evil spirit responded, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” (Acts 19:15).* As a result, the “*man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*” (Acts 19:16). It’s not a good idea to stand in your own righteousness!

Our righteousness does not stand in anything we have done, are doing, or will ever do. No person can earn righteousness or attain it on their own merits. Our righteousness exists solely because we are in relationship with the only Righteous One who ever walked this earth. Paul wrote to the Philippians, *My passion is to be consumed with him and not clinging to my own “righteousness” based in keeping the written Law. My “righteousness” will be his, based on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—the very righteousness that comes from God. (Philippians 3:9 TPT).*

When we put on the breastplate of righteousness and identify fully with Jesus Christ, we purge ourselves of sin, make our flesh come in line, and put off the old man. We allow God’s righteousness to come forth in our motives, our thoughts, and our deeds, then we are in a position to bear spiritual fruit, to discern and display all things that are excellent, and we are called, “*becoming pure and without offense until the unveiling of Christ*” (Philippians 1:10). Paul wrote to the Philippians:

And you will be filled completely with the fruits of righteousness¹ that are found in Jesus, the Anointed One—bringing great praise and glory to God! (Philippians 1:11).

The righteousness of Jesus Christ puts us in the spiritual position to choose the right things, do the right things, say the right things, and stand holy and spotless before the enemy. Confronted with the righteousness of God, the devil must flee from us! He cannot wound our hearts because God's breastplate of righteousness is in place. All he sees is the bride of Christ, and the Bible tells us how we are clothed: *Let us rejoice and exalt him and give him glory, because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. ^{v8} Fine linen, shining bright and clear, has been given to her to wear, and the fine linen represents the righteous deeds of his holy believers.*" (Revelation 19:7,8 TPT).

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness purifies and protects our hearts and centers our lives on God. When we meditate on and wonder at the awesome reality that we are righteous through Jesus' blood, that the Father looks at us and sees a pure, shining bright saint and not the terrible sinner we have been, all we want to do is that which is right in God's eyes! None of the devil's temptations hold any allure for us. None of his lies entice us because all we want is God. A purified heart is a protected heart and a strong heart. None of the tactics of the devil will prevail when our hearts beat with the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (Ephesians 6:15 KJV).

Paul tells us to put on the armor of God so we can stand against evil, but how can we stand if our feet are injured or not properly working? Remember Methibosheth? Jonathan's son and King Saul's grandson? He was dropped on his feet as a small child. As a result, he was lame in both feet and had to be carried everywhere he went (see 2 Samuel 4:4). This is not a picture of standing strong!

Physically, our feet provide balance to our entire body and are a major component of our ability to move from one place to another. When our feet are injured, our whole body is affected. Although our feet are precious parts of our body, they are often neglected and overlooked until something happens to them.

It is so important to protect our feet from harm, which is why wearing the proper shoes is vital. Though shoes are now seen as fashion statements, they really function to protect our feet from injuries that would impair our walking or even prohibit us from walking altogether. For a soldier, however, having the proper shoes can mean the difference between life and death, victory and defeat.

The Roman soldier wore a very distinctive shoe in battle. The *caliga'*, a strong sandal, had a sole studded with nails that pierced the ground and provided tremendous stability. To add to this Paul uses *betomaza* which the KJV translates "preparation" but would best be translated "established" or a "firm foundation". As the *caliga'* provided a firm foundation for the Roman soldier, we are established and have a firm foundation in the Gospel of peace.

Next, we need to distinguish the phrase "Gospel of peace" from the phrase "the Gospel". Paul is not talking specifically about spreading the gospel but rather, he is pointing out one of the benefits of the gospel! The peace of God! The gospel settles, strengthens, and stabilizes believers.

Ephesians 6:15 is saying that the *firm foundation of the Gospel is that we walk in peace.*

- We have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (See Romans 5:1).
- We have peace between Jew and Gentile (see Ephesians 2:14) as well as among races, social and economic classes and genders. (See Galatians 3:28).
- We have peace in believing, which causes us to abound in hope. (See Romans 15:13).
- We have peace in the Holy Spirit. (See Galatians 5:22).
- We are unified as a body through the bond of peace. (See Ephesians 4:3).
- We have peace from God at all times. (See 2 Thessalonians 3:16).

The Bible also says that we are not to go anywhere or do anything, think any thought or make any statement, which does not maintain the peace of God in our lives. Only the peace of God will keep us standing firm when the violent attacks of the enemy come against us.

For you will leave your exile with joy and be led home wrapped in peace. The mountains and hills in front of you will burst into singing and the trees of the field will applaud! (Isaiah 55:12 TPT).

Let your heart be always guided^l by the peace of the Anointed One, who called you to peace as part of his one body. And always be thankful. (Colossians 3:15 TPT).

for as you keep walking forward on God's paths all your stumbling ways will be divinely healed! ^{v14}In every relationship be swift to choose peace over competition, and run swiftly toward holiness, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:13-14 TPT).

then God's wonderful peace that transcends human understanding, will make the answers known to you through Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:7 TPT).

Not only do feet support the entire body, but they take us wherever we go. Thus, the feet represent our will. When our feet are shod – covered with the Gospel of peace, we will go only where God gives us peace to go. We will not obey any other voice but His because only His voice gives us peace. The peace of God brings balance to our lives, keeps our priorities in godly order, and shows us His perfect will. God's peace is our compass in life.

When the devil does his best to get us to walk down this wrong path and that wrong path, to lead us astray, the peace of God will keep us on the right road. The enemy will introduce false teachings and false doctrines to capture our minds. He will present alluring and seductive temptations, trying to get us to take idols into our hearts. But when we wear our gospel shoes of peace, we will believe only God's Word, walk only where the Holy Spirit gives us peace to walk, and worship only Jesus! Any lack of peace will alert us that we are off the path and headed for the devil's quicksand, and God's peace will lead us back to the safety of His will.

Spiritually then, having our feet fitted with or bound with the Gospel of peace keeps our will firmly established in God's will and our walk with Jesus unhindered. Our hearts and minds are led by peace and we have no need to fear the enemy. Therefore, we should put on the firm foundation of the Gospel of peace at all times.

Stay in alignment with God's commandments to you. Walk out the prophecy He has spoken over your life. Direct your path toward those things that the Holy Spirit says belong to you.

Whatever God has told you He will do in your life, write it down. Habakkuk 2:2: *"Write the vision, and make it plain upon the tables, that he may run that reads it."*

Refer to it often and live as if you are already receiving it. Don't go into places or situations where the name of Jesus isn't lifted up. Don't get your feet tangled up in relationships that conflict with God's will for your life. Don't get bogged down in projects or ideas that fail to bring glory to God. Go only where the gospel is welcome and the peace of the Lord prevails.

You begin to put on the armor by first bearing your soul to Him in complete honesty and truth, making certain that your mind and heart are totally in line with His Word. When this belt of truth is firmly in place around the most private areas of your life, then you can attach the breastplate of righteousness, which declares that you stand absolutely and eternally right before God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Next, you put on your gospel shoes of God's peace and line up your will and your way with God's will.

At this point you have purified your heart, embraced the reality of who you are in Christ, and faced the right direction. You are ready to put on the rest of God's armor.

..... coming next month: Faith, Salvation, and God's Word.

To my fellow fighters..... Keep the Faith!

Chief

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Christ's

Heart

In

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